



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Drought Advisory for Cape Cod and Islands, Southeast Massachusetts

Increased monitoring of water resources to begin for two regions

[Map of drought advisory area, data, reports and water conservation tips](#)

BOSTON – Tuesday, October 28, 2014 - Following two months of unusually dry weather, Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Maeve Valley Bartlett today announced that conditions warrant the issuance of a Drought Advisory in two of the Commonwealth's six water resources management regions.

The Advisory covers the Cape Cod/Islands and Southeast Regions of Massachusetts and calls for state, regional and local water officials to be vigilant, especially concerning fire danger and water supply for firefighting.

This determination was based on the recommendation of the Drought Management Task Force, which met on Friday, October 17 at the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) headquarters in Framingham. An Advisory, the second of five levels of drought conditions outlined in the Massachusetts Drought Management Plan (Normal, Advisory, Watch, Warning and Emergency), indicates a level of dry conditions that warrants closer tracking by agencies at all levels of government.

Additional rainfall in October is expected to stabilize conditions, but the Drought Advisory will remain in effect until ground water levels return to normal. The Advisory is effective retroactively to October 1.

Task Force officials noted that, while some smaller reservoir systems in the Drought Advisory areas are low for this time of year, the Massachusetts Water Resources

Authority (MWRA) supply system is well within normal operating range. Some other public water suppliers have implemented conservation measures in response to the dry conditions. EEA and its agencies encourage people to conserve water as a matter of good practice. While the water season is nearly over, citizens are asked to abide by water restrictions imposed by their public water supplier.

Rainfall in the Cape Cod and Southeast Regions has declined since July, with cumulative precipitation deficits of four to five inches below normal for the months of August and September. For the months of August and September, precipitation was less than 50 percent of normal in the two regions covered by the Drought Advisory.

September's stream flow was extremely low in the southeast region of the state, even for this time of year when seasonally low stream flow is expected.

While streamflows in many rivers in southeast Massachusetts have begun to recover with recent rains in October, streamflows in the Wading River near Norton, Three Mile River at North Dighton, and the Segreganset River at Dighton have not. Ground water levels have also declined to below normal during October, although these are slower to respond to the rainfall deficit than stream flow. Small water supply reservoirs are below normal, which could lead to problems meeting demand next summer if winter and spring precipitation is deficient. Dry soil conditions could also contribute to difficulties in managing forest fire spread, especially in the coarse sandy soils of southeast Massachusetts and the Cape and Islands.

A Drought Advisory requires the Drought Management Task Force to meet on a regular basis to more closely assess conditions across the state, coordinate dissemination of information to the public, and help state, federal and local agencies coordinate any responses that may be needed in the future. The Task Force will next meet in November. The advisory is based on thresholds contained in the Massachusetts Drought Management Plan, a blueprint developed by the Drought Management Task Force to guide state activities in response to droughts and extended periods of dry weather.

The Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force comprises representatives of EEA, MEMA, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Agricultural Resources, Department of Public Health, Department of Public Utilities, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Weather Service, Massachusetts Water Works Association and the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards.

MEMA is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures. MEMA's staff of professional planners, communications specialists and operations and support personnel is committed to an all hazards approach to emergency management. By building and sustaining effective partnerships with federal, state and local

government agencies, and with the private sector - individuals, families, non-profits and businesses - MEMA ensures the Commonwealth's ability to rapidly recover from large and small disasters by assessing and mitigating threats and hazards, enhancing preparedness, ensuring effective response, and strengthening our capacity to rebuild and recover. For additional information about MEMA, go to www.mass.gov/mema.

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